



## Social Enterprise Scotland AGM and Policy Forum Report

June 2020

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### Aileen Campbell, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government

- Thanked sector for its agile, responsive and committed approach as Covid hit, noting the £350M Government response.
- Work was now looking at how we rebuild for the future, recognising the diversity of the sector and that recovery may be at different stages.
- Moving forward will require more collaboration and partnership.
- Updated action plan had been due April 2020. It was delayed given Covid and while not rebuilding the plan from scratch work was being undertaken to ensure it was Fit for Purpose post Covid.
- There is an appetite for change and recovery does not simply mean going back to where we were – need to ensure social policy gains (e.g. rough sleeping, community empowerment) are not lost and that we tackle inequality, looking at wellbeing not just GDP.

### Sebastian Burnside, Chief Economist, Royal Bank of Scotland

- The Royal Bank of Scotland is at the start of a journey to transform the bank to be purpose led – championing the potential of people, families and business to help them thrive.
- They recognise that stakeholders are looking for more than just quantitative outcomes.
- The 25% drop in the economic activity in April has had a huge impact and moving forwards growth will be impacted by the policy environment and agility of customers but we can't run away from the fact that we still don't know how many businesses will make it through the Covid situation.
- The Covid situation has provided a real opportunity for change and there is a strong expectation we are building back to a different future.
- Previous shocks and pandemics have also shone a light on the unflattering aspects of the way society works and radically accelerated changes. Some communities hit harder than others.
- Trends accelerated include digital changes (online shopping, less cash, home working, more use of tech) and this will drive other changes e.g. how we use space.
- We need to ask how we lock in some of the gains e.g. greenhouse emission drops as we move forwards.

## Additional comments from Q and A

- Change and collaboration may be uncomfortable but will require some honest and frank conversations.
- Covid has brought partners together in some instances for true collaboration on key issues – built on unity of purpose not competition e.g rough sleeping, Third Sector Resilience Fund.
- Trust has been important where previous red tape and bureaucracy may have strangled public sector interventions.
- Need to move beyond same players and ideas – put ideas our way!
- There is still a long way to go on social and environmental impact but it is becoming increasingly important for all businesses.
- Moving forwards there is an expectation that larger companies may be thinking differently re their discretionary spend – could partnering with social enterprise be a better way of connecting with communities?

## Breakout room/chat feedback

- Social enterprises are leading the way for how to do business but need to be considered in government plans for business and not just the third sector because until we transform other sectors to embody principles of the third sector, we aren't achieving the systems change to which we aspire
- Instead of talking about collaboration we have to just keep doing it
- COVID could offer an opportunity to rise to the occasion - majority of SEs are set up to solve societal problems; something that is not yet visible in terms of society, new emerging social entrepreneurs will come out; but need to be well equipped to deal with this in the challenging times
- We need to agitate and push social enterprise more as a solution in key issues such as climate change and inequality.
- Right now income is really concerning (Social enterprises often secure sponsorship from businesses or generate their income through business - Either way, if business fails, social enterprises are in a really tough spot
- Charities are actually in a stronger position in the short term than social enterprises even though social enterprises should be more sustainable in the long run

## #TimeforChange series

This event is part of a series of conversations #TimeforChange sponsored by Keegan and Pennykid.

